

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1439

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 341

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK, EI

SUBJECT: NEW NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY OF STATE GOES PUBLIC

1. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND ROY MASON GAVE HIS FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 27. IN PREPARED OPENING STATEMENT HE FIRST PAID TRIBUTE TO POLICE AND ASKED FOR PUBLIC ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THEM. HE STRESSED HIS ROLE UP TO NOW AS LISTENER TO NORTHERN IRISH OPINIONS AND, IN THE ORDER OF ARRANGEMENT OF HIS REMARKS, HE GAVE PRIORITY TO SERIOUS ECONOMIC SITUATION FOLLOWED BY SECURITY PROBLEM AND THEN TOUCHED ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION. HE EMPHASIZED THAT DIRECT RULE WILL CONTINUE "DETERMINEDLY AND DECISIVELY" WITH MINISTERS SPENDING MORE TIME ON THE JOB AND ASSERTED THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION BUT THAT THE ARMY WILL REMAIN IN WHATEVER STRENGTH REQUIRED FOR AS LONG AS THE SITUATION DEMANDS. HE AFFIRMED THAT AIM OF DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT REMAINS AND DENIED THERE WAS POLITICAL VACUUM HERE. HIS IMPRESSION IS THAT THERE POLITICAL WHIRLPOOL WITH "MANY SWIRLING FOR SOLUTIONS". HE CITED HOPEFUL GLIMMERINGS AS WOMEN'S PEACE MOVEMENT, TRADE UNION CAMPAIGN FOR "BETTER LIFE FOR ALL", CONTINUING SUCCESS OF ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY (RUC).
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IMPROVED BORDER COOPERATION AGAINST TERRORISM AND "IMPROVED

ANTI-TERRORIST LEGISLATION FROM DUBLIN." IN LATER QUESTIONING HE SAW PROVISIONAL IRA AS LOSING THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN "REELING BACKWARDS BECAUSE OF THE SUCCESS OF THE RUC" AND "KILLING THEIR OWN KITH AND KIN". HE SAID THERE WERE NO TALKS NOW WITH PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN AND NONE PENDING BUT HE REFUSED TO SAY THERE WOULD NEVER BE TALKS.

2. CONGEN VIEWS MASON APPROACH SO FAR AS CORRECT IN CIRCUMSTANCES. ESSENTIALLY HE HAS STAMPED HIS NEW MARK ON CONTINUATION OF HIS PREDECESSOR'S POLICIES. TO DISAPPOINTMENT OF SOME AND RELIEF OF OTHERS HE IS NOT GOING TO LAUNCH A NEW CAMPAIGN AGAINST TERRORISM. HE IS FOLLOWING THE SLOWER PROCESS OF "DE-POLITICIZING" TERRORIST ACTS THROUGH CONVICTIONS FOR CRIMES SOLVED BY POLICE. HE HAS DISPELLED SOME LOYALIST EUPHORIA AND ALLAYED SOME APPREHENSIONS ON THE PART OF THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY. FINALLY, HE HAS LEFT INITIATIVE FOR DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT WHERE IT BELONGS -- IN HANDS NORTHERN IRELAND PEOPLE AND LEADERS. SPICER

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